

# Student Protests in Athens

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

Europe - Greece

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The Regional Security Office at the U.S. Embassy Athens reported the following:

On June 27th in downtown Athens, student protesters erupted into riots and clashed with police. Of the estimated 2,000 protesters, press sources report that approximately 150 were hooded anarchists who infiltrated the crowd, escalating the situation to violence. Press reports indicate that about 50 of these anarchists threw stones and Molotov Cocktails at the police and used trash cans and chairs from local cafes to start small fires and barricade the police out of Athens' University Law School. Over the course of the afternoon, the police used tear gas to control the crowd which began to disperse around 1830 hours. Police report that four protesters and four journalists sustained injuries.

The students were protesting against proposed legislation to privatize Greek universities. These protests also coincided with an international ministerial education meeting. Left-wing activists' websites encouraged participation and reported that student protests were fighting against a "neo-liberal" assault on higher education in Greece.

Although American interests were not specifically targeted, they did suffer collateral damage. Anarchists attacked the Hellenic-American Union resulting in an undetermined amount of destruction.

A few hundred student protesters returned to downtown Athens on June 28th and 150 more on June 29th but both of these protests remained peaceful.

This protest activity fits into a larger trend of left-wing activists using website blogs to spread propaganda and encourage participation at left-wing rallies. Like the anti-CPE protests in Paris, anarchists are also thought to be responsible for escalating the originally peaceful protest to violence. American interests were not specifically targeted but as during other protests in Europe, the American private sector with storefront property was vulnerable to sustaining collateral damage. It is important to understand that even peaceful protests that are not anti-American in nature can quickly become violent and activists may indiscriminately attack easy targets.